

***Praises President for candor in admitting lack of transparency***

Washington, D.C. –U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (FL-13), the author of the “Sunshine Resolution” requiring open talks on health care reform, praised President Obama’s candor in admitting it was a “mistake” to exclude the public from health care negotiations and called on the President to bring immediate transparency to the process.

“I give the President some credit for admitting they made a mistake excluding the public and the press from health care negotiations,” said Buchanan. “But it’s is one thing to admit you were wrong—and it’s another to do something about it. I urge the President to open up the process as we move forward on legislation that will impact all Americans.”

Politico reported yesterday that, “After weeks of denials from the White House that the health care reform effort failed to exhibit the transparency President Barack Obama promised on the campaign trail, Obama is conceding that locking the public out of key discussions was a ‘mistake.’”

House leaders have refused to allow a vote on Buchanan’s resolution; H. Res. 847, which would put the House on record against secret, closed-door negotiations. A total of 166 bipartisan members of Congress have signed a discharge petition filed by Buchanan to bring his resolution, which has 171 cosponsors, to the floor for a vote.

A growing list of 30 groups has joined forces to help secure the 218 signatures needed to bypass the Speaker of the House and bring to the floor.

# POLITICO

## **President Obama: Lack of transparency a 'mistake'**

After weeks of denials from the White House that the health care reform effort failed to exhibit the transparency President Barack Obama promised on the campaign trail, Obama is conceding that locking the public out of key discussions was a “mistake.”

“We had to make so many decisions quickly in a very difficult set of circumstances that after awhile, we started worrying more about getting the policy right than getting the process right,” Obama told ABC’s Diane Sawyer Monday. “But I had campaigned on process—part of what I had campaigned on was changing how Washington works, opening up, transparency. ...The health care debate as it unfolded legitimately raised concerns not just among my opponents, but also amongst supporters that we just don’t know what’s going on. And it’s an ugly process and it looks like there are a bunch of back room deals.”

Obama said he planned to address the point in his State of the Union address on Wednesday.

“The process didn’t run the way I ideally would like it to and that we have to move forward in a way that recaptures that sense of opening things up more,” Obama said.

The president called the lack of transparency “my responsibility,” but moments later in the interview he suggested that decisions to handle key discussions in private were made by Congress.

“Let's just clarify. I didn't make a bunch of deals,” Obama told ABC. “There is a legislative process that is taking place in Congress and I am happy to own up to the fact that I have not changed Congress and how it operates the way I would have liked.”

During the 2008 campaign, Obama often promised to put health care reform negotiations on C-SPAN so the public could see and comment on the demands made by various players.

As the process unfolded last year, critics complained not just about closed Congressional negotiations on health care, but about deals the White House worked out behind closed doors with pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies, hospitals and unions. At times, Republicans and liberal Democrats have joined in the complaints.

Several of the closed negotiating sessions over the bill have taken place at the White House. Less than two weeks ago, on January 13, Obama personally attended much of a daylong, closed meeting ironing out differences between the House and Senate bills. However, Obama insisted Monday that the White House has delivered on the transparency he had direct control over.

“I think it is important to know that the promises we made about increased transparency, we've executed here in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,” Obama said. “I mean, this is the first White House in history where you know anybody who has walked into my office, anybody who has walked into the White House, you actually have a record of who comes in. We have put more stuff on the Internet than ever.”

Read more: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0110/31990.html#ixzz0di6G9JFY>

